



U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION
1225 New York Ave. NW – Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20005

Statement of Commissioner Rosemary Rodriguez Regarding
EAC Glossary of Key Election Terminology [English/Spanish]
Public Meeting in Kansas City, Missouri
April 18, 2007

Things that today are taken for granted were, not so very long ago, prohibited. In the case of the fundamental right of citizenship – the right to vote – Even when the full force of the federal government being used, Congress still could not ensure that every American who wanted to exercise the opportunities this wonderful Country offers, was able to do so.

In fact, it took several Acts of Congress to ensure that all Americans enjoyed the right to vote. In 1965, Congress enacted the Voting Rights Act. The Voting Rights Act was necessary because, despite the rights and guarantees granted by the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, many States still refused to give many American citizens the right to vote.

A decade later, in 1975, Congress strengthened the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to make sure that citizens who were not fluent in English also were guaranteed the right to vote. Although States lacked the authority to impose language requirements on voters, some States still refused to make the franchise fully available to American citizens whose first language was not English. Indeed, ironically some of those who were deprived of the right to vote because they did not speak English – and who were guaranteed voting rights by the amendments to the Voting Rights Act – were the first Americans, preceding the arrival of Columbus and the Mayflower. To correct this problem, Congress required the States to provide bilingual, and sometimes multilingual, ballots and other election materials where the population was in need.

Finally, in 2006, 41 years after the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was enacted, President Bush signed the bi-partisan Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006 because there are some in our Country who still need the protection of the Congress to guarantee their right to vote.

In 1979 the Federal Election Commission, in an effort to facilitate the language provisions of the amendments to the Voting Rights Act, made available a glossary of election terms in Spanish. Sections 241(b)(5) and 241(b)(14) of the Help American Vote Act of 2002 charge the Election Assistance Commission with examining the technical feasibility of providing voting materials in eight or more languages for voters who speak those languages and who have limited English proficiency. Today, 28 years later, it is the

Election Assistance Commission's profound honor to publish a new Spanish language glossary that is comprehensive in scope, culturally competent in approach, and available, if the Commission votes to adopt it, to all Americans.

Today, I am expressing my whole-hearted support for the adoption of the 2007 Glossary of Key Election Terminology in English/Spanish - Spanish/English.

Times have changed. But two things that have not changed are the face of America – a face composed of individuals from many different countries – and the fact that we remain a nation of immigrants. As immigrants become citizens, and participate fully in all of the rights and obligations of citizenship, the Election Assistance Commission will meet them at the voting booth door, by providing glossaries of election terms not only in Spanish but shortly in Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Korean and Tagalog.

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